

In Support of Bill #5443: Concerning Benefits For Surviving Spouses Under The Teachers' Retirement System

March 19, 2012

**John T. Sugros
272 Village Hill Road
Willington, CT. 06279
H# (860) 684-4780
C# (860) 212-7017
johnsugros@att.net**

I am John Sugros from Willington, CT. and a surviving spouse, here today requesting your support for Bill #5443.

My late wife, Joanne Sugros, was a teacher in the Tolland School system for 38 years. She chaired the Mathematics Department, taught all levels of Latin and coached women's Field Hockey and Tennis, receiving recognition as "Coach of the Year" in the latter, from this Legislature.

We were married for 34 years and had no children.

In April 2008, Joanne was diagnosed with inoperable brain cancer. The only alternative for treatment was combined radiation and chemotherapy.

After two months of five-days-a-week, radiation treatment and chemotherapy at Yale-New Haven hospital – some 45 miles distant from our home – Joanne became progressively debilitated with regard to her cognitive and motor functions.

She lost the ability to walk, to coordinate her arm and hand movements, the ability to converse and most regrettably, the ability to swallow. As a consequence, a gastric tube was surgically implanted for nutrition and hydration, to address issue.

In addition, Joanne became diabetic due to the corticosteroid administered to suppress pressure-induced pain from the tumor and very susceptible to infections due to her comprised immune system resulting from these treatments.

By July 2008, Joanne was confined to a bed, unable to walk, or to communicate or to attend to her needs.

From that time, I was Joanne's primary care-giver in our home, with the assistance of the regional CT. Hospice organization.

I will not disturb you with the details of that existence for Joanne – or me – as I feel certain that the visual images are very likely well known to you. Suffice to say, it was an emotionally distressing, difficult time for both of us.

While Joanne was undergoing treatment – and while she retained her cognitive functions – we discussed the reality of her disease and our thoughts about our lives together on numerous occasions.

Joanne sought to provide me some small measure of comfort by saying that she was strong-willed and determined to make a full recovery, but even if the worst should come to pass and I was alone, that I would be the recipient of her retirement, so that I might go on and be unencumbered by our debt.

Regrettably, Joanne was mistaken. She died January 4, 2009.

I no longer have my life mate of 34 years. And I have been quickly depleting my 401k balance, paying down our mutually-incurred debt and medical expenses not covered by Joanne's insurance.

It has been a difficult three years for me. Frankly, I often ponder the future.

Now, I understand and appreciate the reality that there is a budgetary impact associated with the proposed Bill #5443.

I ask you, however, please keep in mind that Joanne worked 38 years as a loyal, dedicated, recognized teacher and had she survived to retire and enjoy her remaining time, she would have been entitled to the funds currently in her retirement account.

As Joanne's surviving spouse and sole beneficiary, I am here before you today, to ask for your support for Bill #5443.

Please do the right thing.

Thank you for your time and attention.

John T. Sugros